

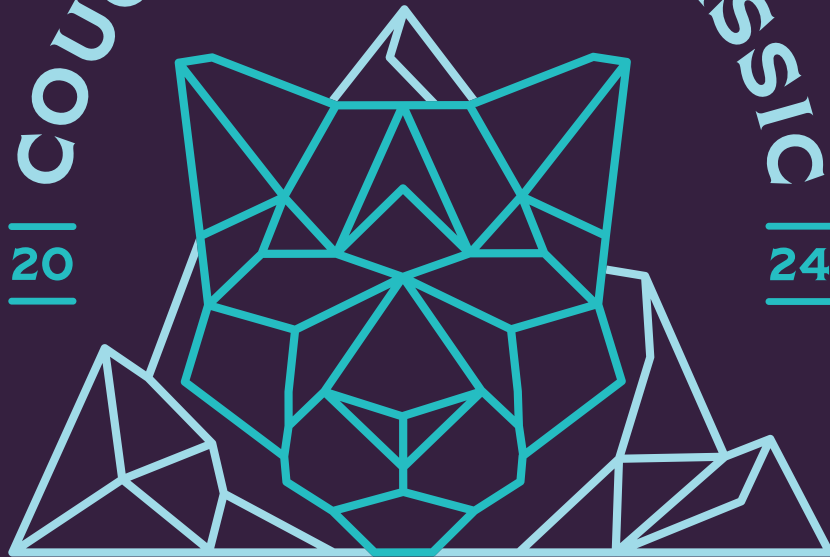
DISCOVER
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COUGAR RIDGE CLASSIC

|| 20 ||

|| 24 ||



VAIL – MINTURN 26K

VAIL RECREATION DISTRICT

2024 RACER MANUAL



DYNAFIT

BY ATHLETES FOR ATHLETES



READY FOR MORE DISTANCE

ULTRA PRO 2

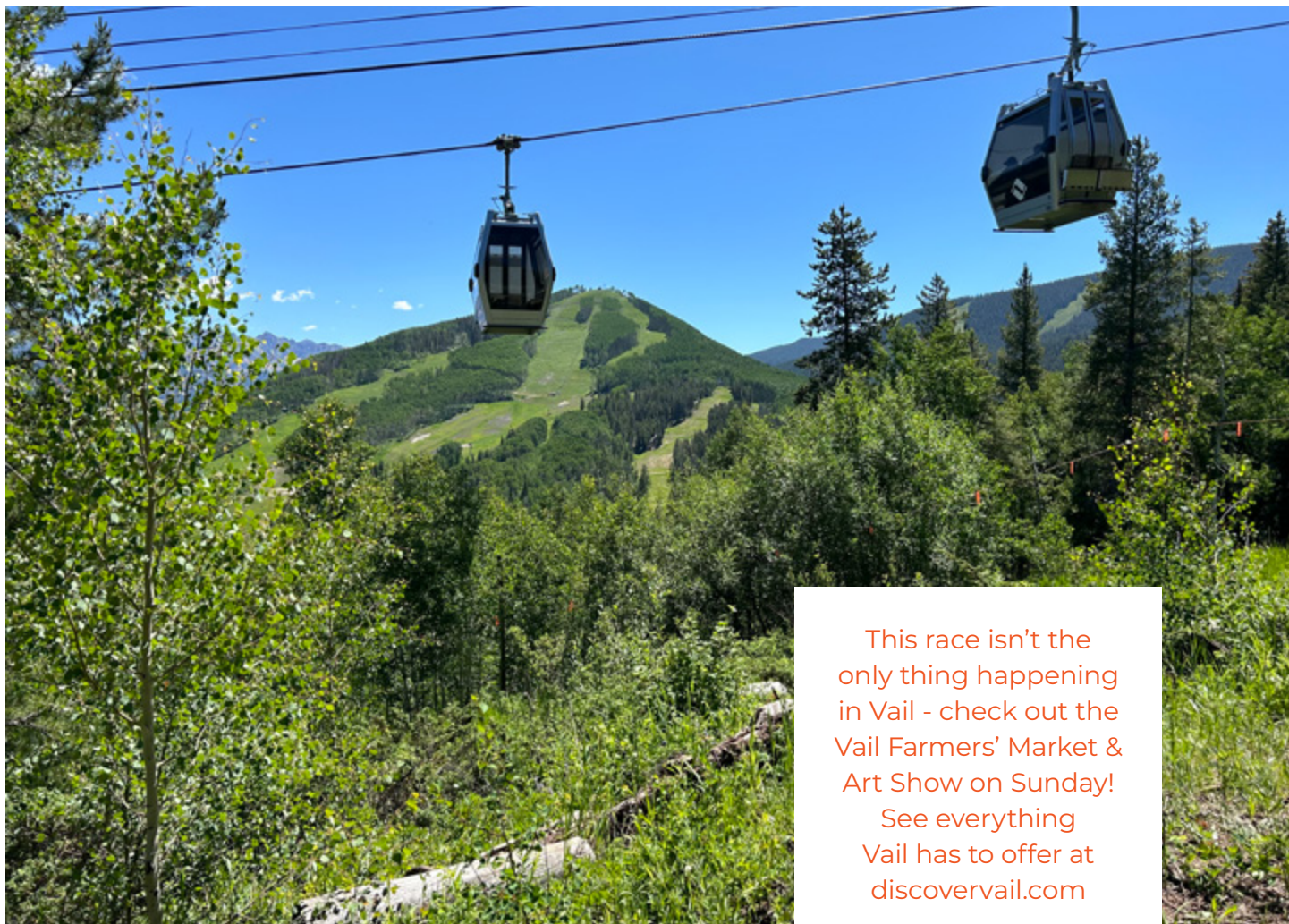
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Additional race details are available at vailrec.com.
For more information call the VRD Sports Department
at 970-479-2280 or email sports@vailrec.com.

A big thank you to all of our amazing sponsors for supporting the inaugural Courage Ridge Classic 26K. This race wouldn't be possible without the support of Discover Vail, the Town of Minturn, Howard Head Sports Medicine, Dynafit, The Steadman Clinic and Steadman Philippon Research Institute, Gravity Haus and Vail's Mountain Haus.





This race isn't the only thing happening in Vail - check out the Vail Farmers' Market & Art Show on Sunday! See everything Vail has to offer at discovervail.com

Vail Mountain was founded by Pete Seibert and Earl Eaton in 1962.

They first climbed Vail Mountain in 1957, thinking it would be the perfect ski area. Little did they know, it's also the ideal area for trail running. Thus, the Cougar Ridge Classic

was born. While the race is new, we look forward to growing into one of the premier endurance runs in Colorado. Ascending over Vail Mountain and into the world-famous Back Bowls, racers will be greeted with beautiful views of the Sawatch Range. With thousands of feet in elevation gain, this race is not for the faint of heart, and those from sea level may feel challenged by the thin air. However,

we hope to set up our racers for success with our Cougar Ridge race staff, Big Cat aid stations and detailed course markings.

ROAD RACES TURNED TRAIL RACES

Trail Races began in Vail thanks to the late Lyndon Ellefson, a Vail local and member of the U.S. Mountain Running Team. It's hard to believe, but races in Vail used to be exclusively road races

on pavement and gravel. Lyndon often participated in these races, casually running and chatting with the lead biker. One day, Ellefson suggested that races should be in the mountains, on trails instead of roads. It sure was a great suggestion – we are in Vail after all! Since then, Vail has hosted a variety of trail races, several national championships for USA Track & Field, and now the Cougar Ridge Classic.



Cradled in the Eagle River Valley, Minturn offers a slice of history among its youthful neighbors, with remnants of the late 1800s visible throughout town.

Named after Robert B. Minturn, a leading 19th-century American merchant and shipping tycoon, the town first embodied the pioneering spirit of early homesteaders. Earning the title of “lettuce capital of the world” thanks to their highly-desired Everkrisp lettuce, the early pioneers built

a strong community foundation that further blossomed with the arrival of miners and the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad in 1887.

With an established railroad, Minturn quickly became a vital transportation and industry nexus, with pioneers transforming

the town into an imperative hub for mining industry which was then thriving between them and Leadville. Minturn's vibrancy led to its incorporation in 1904, catering to its growing community. Over the years, Minturn transitioned from its agricultural and railroad roots to a beloved mountain getaway. Despite inevitable changes, Minturn retains its unique character, thriving with outdoor recreation, art, restaurants, and boutique businesses.

Today, Minturn is celebrated as a true mountain town: a friendly haven where the spirit of the Old West greets the new. It invites you to explore its storied streets, to become a part of its living history, and to experience the genuine hospitality that makes it a Rocky Mountain gem.



Today, Minturn is celebrated as a true mountain town: a friendly haven where the spirit of the Old West greets the new."

Nestled in the heart of the Rockies Playground, Minturn, Colorado, is a funky, small town that offers a perfect blend of outdoor exploration, historic small-town vibes, and scenic views. Minturn is a must visit and has something for everyone whether you're passing through, taking a day trip from elsewhere in the Vail Valley, or looking for a unique getaway.



www.minturn.org
Small Town, Big Charm

A MOMENT SPONTANEITY

Experience a village where the natural world is
seamlessly interwoven with every moment.

#VailMoment



GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR STAY BY VISITING [DISCOVERVAIL.COM](https://discovervail.com)

COURSE DESCRIPTION & STATS

We are thankful to be hosted by the Town of Vail and Vail Mountain Ski Resort for our start and to the Town of Minturn for our finish.

The course is a point-to-point race, starting at Dobson Arena in Vail and finishing in the Town of Minturn.

Racers will begin by traversing up the front side of Vail Mountain towards Mid-Vail. This will be a long consistent climb that we like to call a “mountain climb.” Upon approaching Mid-Vail, racers will continue to ascend Vail Mountain up Kinnickinnick Trail.

As you approach Wildwood, we congratulate you on making it up Vail Mountain, you’re 11,000 feet above sea level. We know you are feeling that Colorado high, with your head down and your thighs shaking, but we

recommend you take a moment to look up and enjoy the view. Feel free to tell the world that you’re King (or Queen) of the Mountain, you earned it!

The trail grade levels off as the course continues along Vail Mountain service roads towards Eagle’s Nest. After Eagle’s Nest, enjoy a steady descent traversing across Game Creek Bowl towards the Cougar Ridge aid station. This is a public trail, so please keep an eye out for bikers and hikers.

The course will then start on a technical but steady descent on the Cougar Ridge single-track trail toward the Town of Minturn. Enjoy flashes of gold as you run in and out of aspen groves before a steep descent onto Minturn roads. From here, you’ll have a short distance to the finish in Minturn’s downtown.

COURSE STATS

ELEVATION GAIN

3,410 Feet

ELEVATION LOSS

3,595 Feet

HIGH POINT

10,981 Feet

LOW POINT

7,861 Feet

AID STATIONS

- #1: Gitalong Road
- #2: Mid-Vail
- #3: Eagle’s Nest
- #4: Cougar Ridge
- #5: Town of Minturn

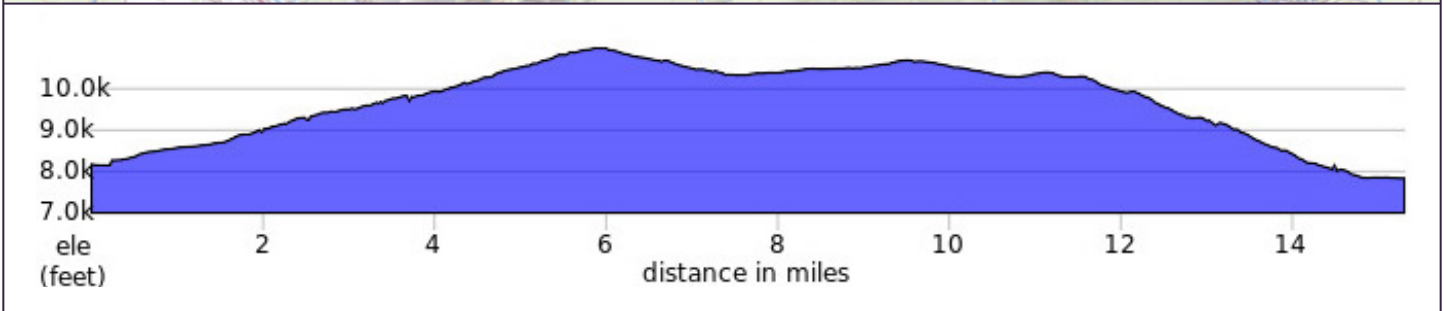
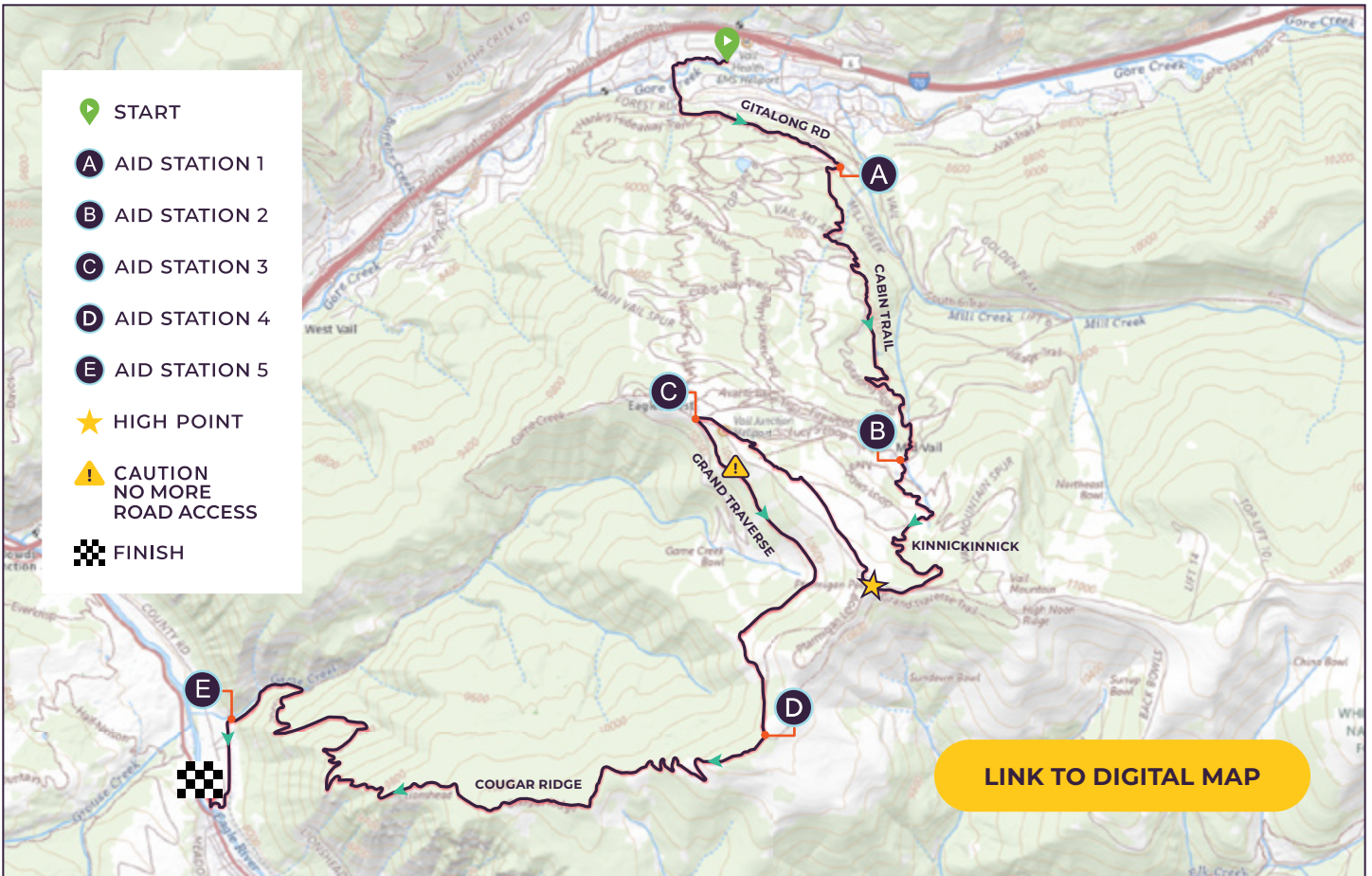
GEAR DROP

Mid-Vail Aid Station
Eagle’s Nest Aid Station
Minturn Finish

RUNNING SURFACE

75% Single-track Trail
24% Dirt/Gravel Road
1% Paved Road





MILE	ALTITUDE	WAYPOINT	+ MILES	+/_ ELEVATION	MAX AVG GRADE
0	8,169'	START - Dobson Arena			
1.5	8,732'	Aid Station #1 - Gitalong Road	1.5 Miles	+ 569 Feet	22.3% 6.5%
4.4	10,250'	Aid Station #2 - Mid-Vail	2.9 Miles	+ 1,382 Feet	15.7% 9%
6	10,981'	Race High Point - Wildwood	1.6 Miles	+ 731 Feet	16.6% 9.6%
7.4	10,326'	Aid Station #3 - Eagle's Nest	1.4 Miles	- 655 Feet	0.0% -7.8%
9.5	10,675'	Aid Station #4 - Cougar Ridge	2.2 Miles	+ 349 Feet	9.3% 3.3%
14.8	8,042'	Aid Station #5 - Minturn	5.3 Miles	- 2,633 Feet	7.8% -4.3%
15.3	7,830'	FINISH - Downtown Minturn	0.5 Miles	- 212 Feet	0.1% -5.9%

ORANGE = CUT-OFFS IMPOSED, SEE NEXT PAGE FOR DETAILS



As you traverse Vail Mountain, we will have stocked aid stations with plenty of snacks and electrolytes. We don't suggest attempting a sub-ultra trail run fueling up on gels and chips, so each aid station will have some hearty food options to keep you going.

Thanks to Skratch Labs, our aid stations will be stocked with electrolyte hydration, energy chews and bars. We'll also have a variety of snacks, water and soda, as well as ice at certain aid stations for cooling off.

We adhere to strict cut-offs for this race. See the table below and page 9 for more information about cut-off times. Course cut-offs are in place for safety reasons and are required to maintain both our permitting and insurance. Please pay

attention to the cut-off times and respect the volunteers who enforce them. You will be asked to take the Gondola down and back to your car or van shuttle to the finish – you will have shuttle information on the backside of your bib. We understand how disappointing this can be, but you earned a beautiful ride down the gondola and gained tons of experience to finish next year!

BIG CAT AID CLASH

We are grateful to our local non-profits, who will be manning the aid stations and cheering you on. These amazing organizations are heavily involved in the growth of the Vail Valley and our community. They are volunteering their time to keep your energy levels high when the course gets rough!

Our aid station organizations are competing in the Big Cat Aid Clash. They are trying to earn your vote as the

King Clowder (that's a group of cats in case you didn't know). There will be a Big Cat Aid Clash Kiosk at the finishing area for racers to vote for their favorite aid station. Expect silly shenanigans and fun vibes as they try to earn your vote while you're grinding away. The King Clowder will win a financial prize/donation to their organization for being the coolest cats on the mountain.

FIRST AID & SUPPLIES

Thanks to Vail Mountain Resorts and Vail Mountain Rescue, we will have experienced medical staff on course for racer safety. They are prepared to assist participants should anything serious arise on the course.

We are grateful to have the Steadman Clinic at the start and finish to help with any medical needs. Reach out to their skilled athletic trainers and they can either help or recommend you to a professional.

All aid stations will have a robust first aid kit for emergencies, cuts, bruises and light foot-care products. If you are prone to foot issues or chafing, carry extra products for problems that occur along the trails between aid stations. We are not allowed to hand out pain medication or other over-the-counter products, so pack your own. More importantly, if you are in pain, please prioritize your health. Take a breather, enjoy the beautiful view and consider other options of slowing down, resting or dropping out if needed.

If you have any specific needs, inform a staff member when you pick up your bib. You will be responsible for your health and should plan to carry what you may need. Additionally, make sure to carry any prescription medication that you may need during the duration of the race. Plan accordingly; we care about your safety!

AID STATION	MILE	CUT-OFF TIME	GEAR DROP	NON-PROFIT
Aid Station #1 - Gitalong Road	1.5		NO	Small Champions
Aid Station #2 - Mid-Vail	4.4	8:45 a.m.	YES	Colorado Snowsports Museum & Hall of Fame
Aid Station #3 - Eagle's Nest	7.4	9:45 a.m.	YES	Gore Range Gravity Alliance
Aid Station #4 - Cougar Ridge	9.5		NO	Vail Avalanche Rescue Dogs
Aid Station #5 - Minturn	14.8		NO	Vail Valley Charitable Fund

**\$100 photo
contest**
See page
15 for more
details!



DROP BAGS + CUT-OFF TIMES

DROP BAGS

Drop bags need to be labeled with your name, bib number and aid station destination. Please keep drop bags small (less than 20L). We will have tarps/trucks near the race start, labeled with which aid station they will be delivered to. Place your drop bag at the appropriate tarp/truck for delivering to aid stations. We are not responsible for gear delivered to incorrect locations. Our drop bag vehicles will depart the start at 6:55 a.m., so plan accordingly.

Eagle's Nest is roughly halfway through the course, so prepare accordingly for seven miles in the White River National Forest.

Drop bags will be returned to the [Town of Minturn](#) finish and awards by course close at 1 p.m. on Saturday. It is your responsibility to pick up your drop bag. If you forgot your bag because you wanted to race home too, please contact us at sports@vailrec.com.

WAYPOINT	MILE	CUT-OFF TIME	GEAR DROP
Aid Station #2 Mid-Vail	4.4	8:45 a.m.	YES
Aid Station #3 Eagle's Nest	7.4	9:45 a.m.	YES
Finish	15.3	1 p.m.	YES

CUT-OFF TIMES

In accordance with our safety plan, Vail Resorts, USFS, and respect for our volunteers' time and safety, cut-off times will be strictly enforced. Runners that are not leaving an aid station by the cut off will be instructed to drop out of the race and take the gondola down to Vail. Alternatively, racers can run back down to Vail. We are not responsible for your safety at this point, take what you need from the aid station and stay safe. If this is your first endurance run or you are unsure of making these cut-offs, plan on having crew support to get a ride to the after-party and awards.



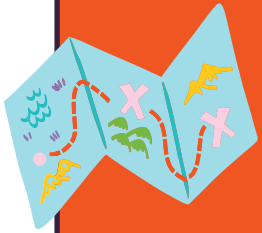


Download the course GPX and study the intersections, elevation profiles and distances between aid stations. Utilize our digital map and Ride w/ GPS to stay on course or pre-run!

Course markings will be **RED** signs with **WHITE** arrows pointing you in the correct direction. A confirmation sign will always follow an intersection to confirm you are still on course and cones will block off any confusing intersections.



Have a copy of the course map with you, either a paper copy or on your phone.



Colorado has a dry climate at a high elevation. Drink plenty of water and stay hydrated.

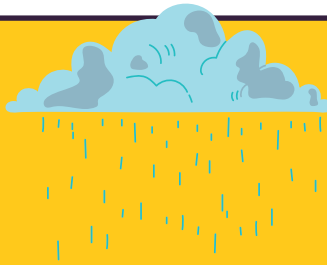


We are running in the White River National Forrest. Please be mindful that you may encounter a wild animal along the trail.

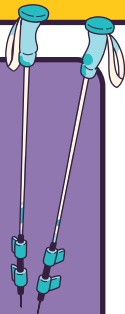
Do not feed or approach. Make noise, look big and do not attempt to pass until they move along.

You are permitted to carry bear spray.

The Rocky Mountains are known for sporadic weather, so bring extra layers and utilize the gear drops at the top of the mountain. The morning will be chilly and will warm up quickly as the sun crests over the Gore Range.



Consider using trekking poles. You'll be traversing over a mountain, and they may be your savior on the ups and downs.



Pour some water on yourself if you're hot. There will be ice at the Mid-Vail and Eagle's Nest aid stations as well to cool off with.

Bring sun protection. You will be climbing 3,410 feet closer to the sun, so protect your skin from those damaging UV rays.



RACE POLICIES & DISQUALIFICATIONS

You can find our policies for deferral, cancellations, transfers and refunds on our website at vailrec.com.

Note that the Cougar Ridge Classic does not issue refunds.

Follow course markings to avoid disqualification and show respect to others.

Failure to follow "leave no trace" principles will result in disqualification. There will be restrooms available at the start, finish and at aid station #5, Mid-Vail and Eagle's Nest.



For more info on our race policies visit vailrec.com!

RACER SPOTLIGHTS | LOCAL CATS

Every racer has a story to tell, and we love sharing yours. Whether you're a big cat who competes internationally or a local cat who participates in the Dynafit Vail Trail Running Series, we want to know why you love to run!

VAIL TRAIL SERIES ALL-STAR

Name Frank Holmes

Hometown Birmingham, Alabama

How did you get into running? I've always been a lifelong runner, ever since I was a child doing school races or running on the beach.

What do you love most about running?

The camaraderie with my fellow racers.

What's your favorite style of race (e.g. trail, road, ultra/subultra, marathon, 5K)?

My favorite distance is the 10K.

What's your most memorable race experience?

Finishing the Leadville 100 in 2017.

What's your favorite trail?

Grand Traverse. Love the serenity and amazing views.

What advice would you give athletes getting into running?

Run your own race. Don't worry about comparing yourself to the other runners.



VAIL TRAIL SERIES ALL-STAR

Name Darcy Beck

Hometown Gypsum, CO by way of Jamestown, PA

How did you get into running?

When covid shut everything down, I decided to just get outside and go for a run (which was super ugly and I barely was able to do a 5K!). And then I just kind of kept going further!

What do you love most about running?

The snacks! JK, I love the community that I have found within running. I have made some amazing friends and everyone is so uplifting. And I love being out on the trails in nature.

What's your favorite style of race (e.g. trail, road, ultra/subultra, marathon, 5K)?

I love being on the trails. I used to think a half marathon was my favorite distance, but now that I'm dipping my toes in the ultra world, I'll get back to you on that!

What's your most memorable race experience?

My first half marathon...I never, ever thought I'd run 13.1 miles and my friend Kayle was there with me the whole time talking me through my tears because it was the hardest thing I'd ever done!

What's your favorite trail? Berrypicker :)

What advice would you give athletes getting into running?

Just get out there. You don't have to be fast to have fun. As long as you're moving, you're doing it right!

RACER SPOTLIGHTS | BIG CATS

DRYLAND COACH

Name Dani Salinsky | **Hometown** Seabrook, TX

How did you get into running?

I started running back in college while training for some half marathons. I've kept up my running over the years by mixing it in regularly with my cross training and functional fitness. I like to mix in interval runs with long runs for my regular training.

What do you love most about running?

I fell in love with the dopamine rush I feel after a long run. I used to think I would never be able to run very far, so one day I finally told myself to find out what happened when I didn't give up. The mental aspect of a long run has always been harder than the physical for me, so I have always loved trying to push my body to see what it's capable of.

What's your most memorable race experience?

When I was younger and my family ran a Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving. At this point, none of my family members had had too much running experience and it was just such an enjoyable experience to be able to run for fun with my family with no expectations and just spending that time together. We may not have been the fastest group then, but we sure had the most fun.

What's your favorite trail?

Gore Creek, Meadow Creek Trail because you can do so much or so little on this trail since it connects all the way to Frisco from East Vail.



DYNAFIT TRAIL HERO

Name Meg Cooke | **Hometown** Wendover, UK

How did you get into running?

I played team sports growing up and then moved to Boulder for work a couple of years ago and fell in love with running.

What do you love most about running?

Spending time in the alpine.

What's your favorite style of race (e.g. trail, road, ultra/subultra, marathon, 5K)?

Steep technical races are my favorite. They're a great way to use different skills and the training for them is really varied and fun

What's your most memorable race experience?

Racing the minotaur skyrace in Canada, the views were stunning when you took a second to look up from your feet!

What's your favorite trail?

I love the trails in the Indian Peaks Wilderness, especially when there's an alpine lake to cool off in mid-run.

What advice would you give athletes getting into running?

Don't be scared of the downhills and instead embrace them. You've worked hard to get to the top of the mountain so focus in, look at the trail ahead to see where the best lines are and let your feet find their way!



After-party and awards will take place at 1:30 p.m. at the Town of Minturn.

AWARDS & PRIZE PURSE

We have an elite category, where the top three men and women will be competing for a cash prize presented by Dynafit. The prize purse is \$500 for first, \$300 for second and \$150 for third.

In addition to cash prizes for top finishers of all ages, the top three places in each category will win! Categories are by gender and age groups in 10 year

increments. We will also have a raffle with some amazing gear that you must be present for, so stick around! If you finish ahead of awards – hang around Minturn and use your bib lunch voucher for a meal at participating restaurants or enjoy some beer from New Belgium Brewing or N/A beer from Best Day Brewing at the finish expo. If you leave before the awards ceremony, please inform



race staff. This helps us when mailing out prizes. We want to make sure you receive your prize, and it's a sad day when packages return to us.

PHOTO CONTEST

Share a photo of the toy cougar on Instagram with [#cougarridgeclassic](#) for a chance to win \$100!

WE'VE GOT YOUR BACK

EVEN WHEN IT'S YOUR KNEES

Don't ignore the aches and pains that prevent you from getting after it. The experts at Howard Head Sports Medicine provide individualized treatment plans to reduce pain, restore function, strengthen and get you back on top.

HOWARDHEAD.ORG

HOWARD HEAD SPORTS MEDICINE
VAIL HEALTH



We recommend parking in Minturn and taking the 6 a.m. race shuttle. This gives you time to utilize the start facility and have quick access to your vehicle at the finish.

MINTURN PARKING

There is parking in the **Minturn Municipal Lot**, adjacent to the Minturn Saloon.

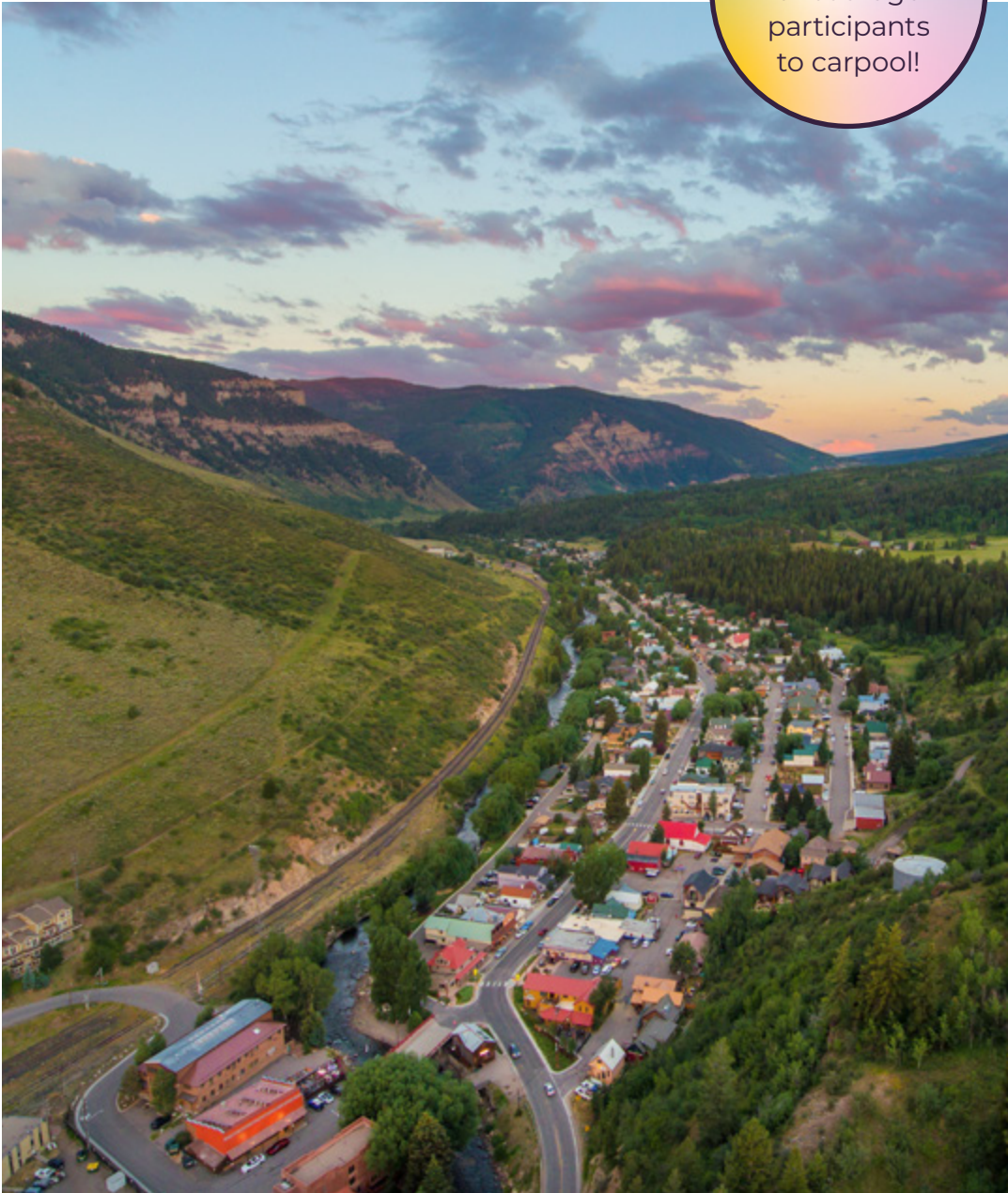
VAIL PARKING

There is free parking in the **Lionshead Parking Structure** and **Vail Village Parking Structure**.

TRANSPORTATION

There will be two shuttles from Minturn to Vail prior to the race at 6 and 6:20 a.m. There will be a shuttle to Vail available to racers periodically after the race.

If driving to the race, we encourage participants to carpool!



EVERGREEN LODGE

With its prime location in Vail Town Center (between Vail and Lionshead Villages), Evergreen Lodge is a short walk or a ride on the complimentary town shuttle, to world-class shopping, dining, summer and winter activities. Racers can receive a group discount by booking online **HERE** or by calling them directly at 970-476-7810 and referring to **Cougar Ridge Classic 26K Trail Running Race**.

VAIL REALTY CONDOS

If a hotel isn't big enough for you, check out our partners at Vail Realty. They have the largest selection of condo and home rentals in the Vail Valley! Visit vailrealty.com/vail-vacation-rentals to book while they're available!



GRAVITY HAUS VAIL

Thanks to our partners at Gravity Haus, racers can book a room with their **discount code: COUGAR RUN**. Enjoy everything Vail has to offer with a beautiful location inside Vail Village, looking at Gore Creek and the beautiful Vail Mountain you'll be running up! Gravity Haus Vail has a limited number of rooms for our racers, visit gravityhaus.com to book now while they are still available!

If you want to be within walking distance of the start and Gravity Haus is booked - there are tons of other options for hotels in Vail Village and Lionshead Village. You can be within a 1-10 minute walk to the race start.



**DISCOUNT CODE:
COUGAR RUN**

GRAVITY HAUS VAIL



gravity haus



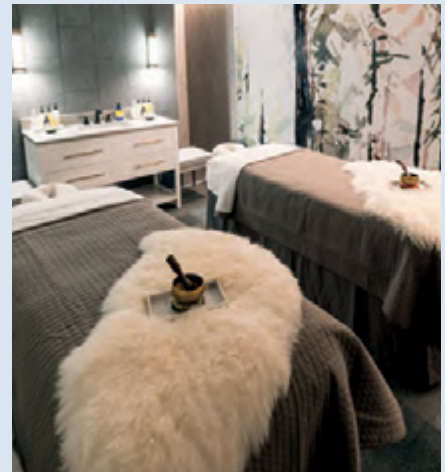
STAY

An award winning space with high end amenities, located in the heart of Vail.



DINE

Dine at cozy alpine bistro, Sloperoom or kickstart your day at Unravel with in-haus roasted coffee.



RELAX

Offering massage, recovery therapy, facials, and ultra-luxe packages, our Spa at Vail is among Colorado's best.

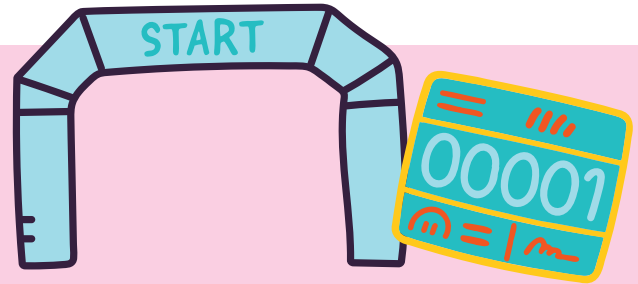




RACE PREP FRI, SEPT. 27

Join us at Gravity Haus Vail and Dryland Spa & Fitness from 3–4:30 p.m. for a race-prep clinic with Veronika Venclova. This clinic will include mobility activation on the turn, followed by a light group run on mountain dirt.

Packet pickup is from 4–7 p.m. at Gravity Haus Vail. If you can't make it, you can pick up your bib at Dobson Ice Arena between 6–6:50 a.m. on race day.



RACE DAY SAT, SEPT. 28

On the day of the event, you can pick up your bib in front of the starting line at Dobson Ice Arena, near Lionshead Village. Bathrooms and water fountains are located inside Dobson Arena. Please plan accordingly as there are limited resources available on the course.

The race will start at 7 a.m. SHARP. You can always start after, but your official race time starts at 7 a.m. The after-party and awards will be held at the Town on Minturn between 1–3 p.m.

TIME	ACTIVITY	LOCATION	ADDRESS
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27			
3-4:30 p.m.	Race Prep with Dryland	Gravity Haus, Vail	352 E Meadow Dr, Vail, CO
4-7 p.m.	Packet Pickup	Gravity Haus, Vail	352 E Meadow Dr, Vail, CO
SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 28			
6 & 6:20 a.m.	Minturn to Vail Shuttle	Town of Minturn	146 Main St, Minturn, CO
6–6:50 a.m.	Day-of Packet Pickup	Dobson Ice Arena	321 E Lionshead Cir, Vail, CO
7 a.m.	Race Start	Dobson Ice Arena	321 E Lionshead Cir, Vail, CO
8:45 a.m.	First Cut-Off	Mid-Vail	
9:45 a.m.	Second Cut-Off	Eagle's Nest	
10–2 p.m.	After-Party	Town of Minturn	101113 Williams St, Minturn, CO
1:30 p.m.	Awards & Raffle	Town of Minturn	101113 Williams St, Minturn, CO



VAIL RECREATION
DISTRICT

A female trail runner is captured in a full-body shot, running towards the camera on a dirt trail. She is wearing a white cap, sunglasses, a blue sleeveless athletic top, black shorts, and a blue hydration vest. A race bib with the number '1395' is pinned to her chest. She is also wearing a watch on her left wrist and yellow and grey running shoes. The background shows a scenic mountain landscape with green hills, a clear blue sky, and distant mountain peaks. A wooden signpost is visible to the left of the runner.

VAILREC.COM



COUGAR RIDGE CLASSIC

VAIL – MINTURN 26K

